



Formula of Concord Session Four: Good Works

- How do we summarize justification in its relation to good works?
- How do we avoid a situation where a proclamation of grace becomes a free pass to laziness or even evil?
- What role do good works play in the life of the believer?

Good Works: Status

One side wrote, "Good works are necessary for salvation. It is impossible to be saved without good works." They also wrote, "No one has ever been saved without good works." But the other side, on the contrary, wrote, "Good works are harmful to salvation." (Ep. IV. 1, p.482)

- At first glance, is this a very important distinction/argument? Why or why not?
- Why would each side hold their view?

Righteousness of Faith: Affirmative and Negative Statements

Good works certainly and without doubt follow true faith – if it is not a dead, but a living faith – just as fruit grows on a good tree.

We believe, teach, and confess that good works should be entirely excluded from the question about salvation, just as they are excluded from the article of justification before God.

We also believe, teach, and confess that all people, but especially those who are born again and renewed by the Holy Spirit are obligated to do good works. (Ep IV.6-8, p.483)

- Wait... didn't they just affirm both sides of the argument?
- Read and discuss Ephesians 2:8-10

There are works that apply to maintaining of external discipline. These are also done by, and required of, the unbelieving and unconverted. These works are commendable before the world and rewarded by God in this world with temporal blessings. Nevertheless, they do not come from true faith. Therefore, in God's sight they are sins and impure because of the corrupt nature and because the person is not reconciled with God (SD IV.8, p.547)

- Too harsh?
- Read and discuss:
 - Matthew 7:18 and Romans 14:23



Many create for themselves a dead faith or delusion that lacks repentance and good works. They act as though there could be true faith in a heart at the same time as the wicked intention to persevere and continue in sin. This is impossible. (SD IV.15, p.548)

Truly good works should be done willingly, or from a voluntary spirit, by those whom God's Son has made free. (SD IV.18, p.549)

The free spirit does not obey from fear of punishment, like a servant, but from love of righteousness, like children. (Ep. IV.12, p.483)

- **Do we have to obey/do good works? In what way do we have to?**
- **Read and discuss:**
 - Psalm 110:3; 2 Corinthians 9:7; Romans 6:17; 8:14-15

We believe, teach, and confess also that works do not maintain faith and salvation in us, but God's Spirit alone does this, through faith. Good works are evidences of his indwelling. (Ep. IV.15, p.483)

In these last times, it is certainly no less needful to encourage people to Christian discipline and to do good works. We need to remind them of how necessary it is that they exercise themselves in good works as a declaration of their faith and gratitude to God. (Ep. IV.18, p.18)

- **So who gets the credit? Why does it matter?**
- **Read and discuss:**
 - Romans 8:13, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Galatians 5:21, Colossians 3:6

We also reject and condemn the teaching that faith and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit are not lost by willful sin, but that the saints and elect retain the Holy Spirit even though they fall into adultery and other sins and persist in them. (Ep IV.18, p.484)

- **So what is the one thing needful for salvation? What is the result of that one thing?**

Read Luther's quotes from SD IV. 10-12